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A DIGITAL EUROVISION FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

THE NEXT STEP FOR EUROPEAN PUBLIC SERVICE
BROADCASTING WITHOUT FRONTIERS

Why and how we must increase the availability of public service broadcasting to the widest possible Pan-European use

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper aims to initiate a discussion in Europe about the future of mass media in relation to the possibilities that can be achieved through technological development and policy innovation to stimulate the rise of a Pan-European identity across the European Union (EU) frontier. More specifically, it centers on how Europe can benefit more from public service broadcasting (PSB)¹ in a way that not only supports media pluralism, democracy and social cohesion on a national level, but widens the remit so that national PSB in Europe supports the formation and proliferation of shared Pan-European values and identity. This paper is based on the following observations:

- › A crucial role for mass media has been to form a public arena where shared conversations and stories have made people across large geographies come together. Hence, mass media has been critical in the formation of national identities, social cohesion and ultimately a key avenue to build legitimacy for the nation state and its key institutions.
- › Unfortunately, across the EU today, there is an absence of a European identity, as just 6 percent of Europeans define² themselves first as European citizens and then by their nationality. This contributes to a lower than necessary level of legitimacy for EU institutions, such as demonstrated in the BREXIT referendum that ended with a victory for the leave campaign.
- › There is a growing danger of a deconsolidation of democracy in Europe especially among younger generations, as only a minority of European millennials put a significant emphasis on the importance of living in a liberal democratic state.³
- › Across the EU, it is difficult to access and understand online public service media content. This is due to the various languages, national media regulation, copyright legislation and contractual agreements that limit the spread of content across EU markets. This prevents the emergence of a shared Pan-European identity.
- › Technological developments have made the free flow of online media ever easier to facilitate. Automatic real-time subtitling is already a reality, and automatic real-time translations are developing quickly, which will allow EU citizens to both access on-line media content, pick up and understand European stories despite the language diversity. This technological development comes with a promise to transform today's almost exclusively national mass media arenas into shared Pan-European ones.
- › Simultaneously, there is a growing discussion within the EU about the socio-economic benefits⁴ associated with Open Government Data. Cap Gemini has estimated that between 2016 and 2020, the market size of Open Data for the EU 28+ countries is expected to increase by 37 percent, to a value of EUR 75.7 billion. The forecasted public sector cost savings for the EU28+ countries in 2020 are EUR 1.7 billion.⁵
- › While Open Government Data initiatives show very promising prospects, such initiatives have so far failed to extend into the domain of PSB, despite being produced for the public and paid for by the public – in other words, by European citizens.



This paper identifies a critical opportunity for the EU project, EU citizens and innovators. By classifying current affairs reporting (news, current affairs and documentaries) produced by/ for PSB to fall within the definition of Open Government Data, European policy makers will unlock access to a wealth of European PSB content for European citizens, journalists and new start-ups to access, interact with, aggregate and disseminate. This policy innovation not only comes with the already acknowledged economic benefits associated with open data and data-driven innovation; it also helps stimulate the

creation of a strong Pan-European identity through increased availability and diversity of European current affairs reporting across EU territories.

THIS PAPER SUGGESTS THAT EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS:

- › Give national PSB a new mission to make news, current affairs and documentaries freely available across the EU for the benefit of mutual understanding between EU citizens in different member states.
- › Classify news, current affairs and documentaries that are produced by/for PSB as Open Government Data, thereby making them freely available across the EU for citizens and organizations to use.



THIS PAPER IS NOT PROPOSING:

- › To undermine the creation of content, as this policy innovation is targeted at a subset of content that is already produced under the remit of PSB and already largely paid for by EU citizens through tax or mandatory TV licenses.⁶ Commercial broadcasting, sports, entertainment and films are out of scope of this proposal.
- › Pan-European licensing of PSB content or other changes in copyright legislation.
- › Changes to must carry rules for PSB content on other technical platforms.
- › Changes to the Audio Visual Media Services Directive.⁷
- › Changes to the European Commission's (EC) ambitions to ensure smooth functioning of EU copyright rules in the Digital Single Market (DSM): while this is a welcomed initiative, its remit is limited to copyright-related barriers, which, even if completely addressed will not solve all issues related to cross-country access to current affairs and news reporting produced by PSB.⁸

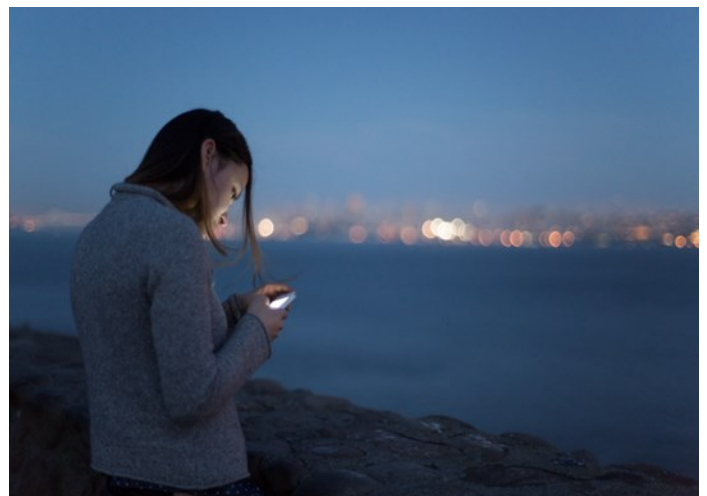
MASS MEDIA AND SOCIETY

The EU member states are all nation states. But their national identities have not come about through a natural process; they are rather the result of a nation-building process that took most of the 19th century to fulfill. A fundamental tool in creating the concept of national unity, or a national community, was the development of mass media. Newspapers, magazines, broadcast radio and television have all played a fundamental role in creating a coherent national identity and put older community affiliations aside and, eventually, into the world of folklore museums. A precondition for this has of course been a common language that mass media can use and the public can understand, or learn to understand. The creation of a national identity was carefully examined by the late Benedict Anderson in his pioneering book *Imagined Communities* from 1983⁹, where he shows that “even heterogeneous state creations, over time, can develop a sense of national community if they can develop a common mass media arena.”

The feeling of a common national identity has been the result of a set of mass media platforms which created a common public arena. Even where there has been fierce debate about political directions and huge ideological differences, the common public arena has been instrumental in creating a feeling of understanding, even among conflicting par-

ties, and therefore produced legitimacy for the state and its key institutions. States which lack a common public arena usually lack a feeling of common identity and therefore also have weak legitimacy for their state institutions.

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MEDIA DISINTEGRATING

The rapid digitalization and convergence of media platforms has had the effect that the audience tends to be scattered among a multitude of media-like services, instead of being glued to a few broadcast radio or TV stations or reading one or two daily newspapers. The role of national mass media is changing and its ability to hold the national public arenas together is at risk.

Citizens and consumers are not moving to a common supranational public arena. They are moving toward individual arenas where people meet other individuals scattered around the globe. Media consumers are more and more unlikely to have the same media consumption as fellow citizens or their next-door neighbors.

The audiences in the scattered arenas are gathered either by individual choice or by some aggregator and/or a set of algorithms that looks for commonality or makes choices for the consumer or in some other way. If the algorithm, in the hands of a few organizations, is what guides individual media consumption in the future, we can expect media disintegration at a national level to be much more severe than we see today at EU level with a mass media divided into 28 different national public arenas. This will not only make it a challenge to keep Europe together in a common frame of reference; it will also be a challenge

to keep any EU member state from losing key elements of its national identity or its key set of common values.

By opening up some elements of PSB such as current affairs, news and documentaries to the widest possible dissemination and by classifying this content as Open Government Data, policy makers can decisively contribute to secure de-facto media plurality going forward and also ensure the establishment and strengthening of a Pan-European identity through increased Pan-European access to national stories, news and identity projections. An interconnected and ideologically diverse Pan-European media landscape can help EU citizens to gain access to alternative interpretations, particularly when a multitude of Pan-European news aggregators emerge that abandon the national lens when selecting, aggregating and making European news available to EU citizens.

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THE EUROPEAN UNION LACKS A COMMON PUBLIC ARENA

One critical issue that European policy makers face is that citizens of the EU lack the feeling of having a common Pan-European identity. The most obvious sign of this problem is the BREXIT referendum that ended with a victory for the leave campaign. The national British media debate that preceded the referendum has its counterparts in many EU member states, more or less pronounced. The conclusion is that after 60 years of cooperation and integration, there is still no common European identity. The EU citizens are divided between at least 28 national identities, not because nature gives these identities, but because they have been formed during the last 150 years in national public arenas largely shaped by national mass media.

FINDINGS FROM EC STANDARD EUROBAROMETER ON EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP 2015¹⁰ SHOW;

- › *Only 6 percent of Europeans define themselves first as European citizens and then by their nationality.*
- › *Only 2 percent of Europeans see themselves as “European only.”*



That after 60 years of cooperation and integration, there is still no common European identity. The EU citizens are divided between at least 28 national identities, not because nature gives these identities, but because they have been formed during the last 150 years in national public arenas largely shaped by national mass media.

Maybe one should not be surprised by the findings on European citizenship. Despite the digital revolution and the increased flow of information across borders, news and current affairs reporting still reaches most EU citizens through their own national media and the public debate that EU citizens engage in continues to be nationally constrained. Furthermore, research shows that national news media has a rather pronounced national bias in its reporting of foreign current affairs, as it is built on national identities, national narratives and even on stereotypes when reporting events regarding foreign news to domestic audiences.¹¹

In addition, there are few transnational broadcast channels that gather large audiences. At the same time, media regulation and copyright makes it difficult for EU citizens to access Pan-European news and current affairs reporting across EU member states while the remits of PSB remain purely national. National ratings provided through the broadcast rating institutes show that national news broadcasts during primetime count millions of viewers and listeners, while even major international European broadcasters usually only have between a couple of thousand and 10,000 views on their online news stories that are available in other countries. While at the same time,

cross-border accesses to national play services to PSB are restricted to EU web users. It seems therefore that there is a very limited number of people who can follow a diverse Pan-European current affairs debate from more than one national perspective. Consequently, Europe lacks a public Pan-European debate and suffers from insufficiently shared European views of its history and its current affairs due to 28 national filters containing the debate to a national level, which therefore precludes the emergence of a common Pan-European identity.



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UNFAMILIARITY CREATES DISTRUST

The fact is that Europeans know and understand very little about each other's different views and, as a result, they cannot appreciate such diversity and therefore they also lack the opportunity to develop a shared Pan-European identity. This is because most people in Europe have in practice no access to, or face momentous barriers to, access to

other EU national media arenas. This Pan-European shared community deficit therefore creates a lack of understanding between European national communities.



Still, the EU depends on political unity and shared institutions, where EU member states benefit from the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. And these EU institutions with agencies and the European Parliament have everything in common with

their national equivalents, except the popular legitimacy.¹² Without a shared European identity, it is hard to build Pan-European solidarity or share common Pan-European values because Europeans lack the "demos," the feeling of being one people.

THE PURPOSES AND CHALLENGES OF PSB

The notion of public service refers to radio and TV broadcasting that operates for the benefit of the public without commercial or other third-party interests. These radio and TV broadcasters are usually state owned or owned by non-commercial entities, have a written remit, are thoroughly regulated and are predominantly funded by the public – through a mandatory license fee, a special tax or just being a part of the state budget.

The Amsterdam Protocol declares that the purpose of PSB is directly related to the democratic, social and cultural needs of each society and to the need to preserve media pluralism.¹³

CHALLENGE 1:

In Europe, there is significantly less emphasis given to the importance of living in a liberal democratic state, especially by those born after 1980 (millennials). For instance, only one in three Dutch millennials accords maximal importance to living in a democracy. The devotion that we saw in the past generation to democratic principles is less strong among younger generations, while support for freedom of speech has decreased as well.¹⁴

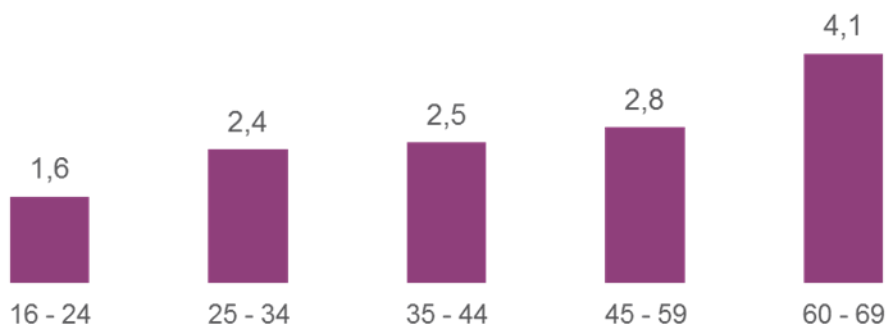
PSB, although having a clear economic relevance, is not comparable to a public service in any other economic sector. There is no other service that at the same time has access to such a wide sector of the population, provides it with so much information and content, and by doing so conveys and influences both individual and public opinion.¹⁵

CHALLENGE 2: SENIORS LOVE THEIR LIVE NEWS– YOUNG GENERATIONS DON'T

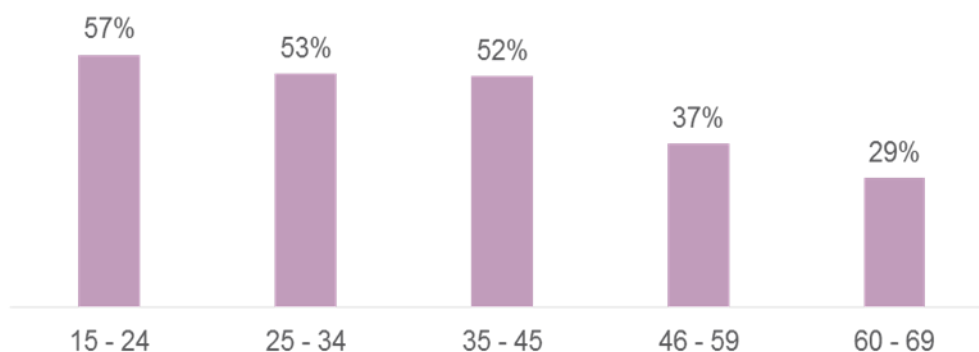
People between the ages of 60 and 69 spend 2.5 times the amount of time watching live news compared with young millennials aged 16-24, see Figure 1. At the same time, these young consumers continue to increase their usage of social media throughout the day for all aspects of their lives – including getting their news updates. For millennials, the pick-and-mix mentality is strong across all media consumption.

Figure 1: Media news habits of old and young

**Average nr of hours watching live news per week per age group
[Self reported]**



**Percentage of consumers that have increased their social
media consumption the last year, by age group [Self reported]**



Source: Ericsson ConsumerLab Analytics Platform 2015

CHALLENGE 3:

The future role of PSB in the new digital era.

- › Most governments offer very little vision or direction in building public service media equipped for the digital market.¹⁶
- › The share and reach of PSB fell in most of the 56 countries studied between 2005 and 2010.¹⁷
- › The future of state and PSB is not being decided in a rational process of evidence-based debate.¹⁸

In summary, PSB faces three key challenges going forward: firstly, delivering on the overall democracy mandate set in the Amsterdam treaty, particularly when support for democracy is waning among younger

generations; secondly, finding adequate channels and formats for disseminating PSB to younger generations; and thirdly, transforming PSB into the digital era that is relevant for European citizens.



PSB BEYOND NATIONAL CONTAINMENT

One key problem that prevents a shared European identity from emerging is the very limited cross-country availability of PSB, including European citizens' ability to access, pick up and understand PSB from other than the national arena. In regards to subscription-based audiovisual services, the EC has a proposal in place for content portability¹⁹ that will make it possible for EU residents that travel to other EU countries to access subscribed media services at home. In other words, portability will allow travelers to access national services from abroad while in another EU country.

But PSB is by its very definition not a subscription-based service and has solely a na-

tional remit. This means that the content portability proposal, as much as it is desired and needed, will not address the issue of Pan-European access to current affairs reporting by PSB. Hence, a wider role for PSB must be envisioned that includes benefits at Pan-European level, which in practice at least means cross-country availability.

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BUILDING ON EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION'S (EBU) SHARING SERVICES

There is a news-sharing service running under the direction of the EBU. The EBU News Exchange gives its members 24/7 access to live and edited news from member broadcasters and media partners. The news content is free of charge and copyright cleared. According to the EBU Annual Report 2015-16, 15,000 individual stories were distributed in 2015. But these are for members only and the idea is to integrate the foreign stories into the national news programs.

The basic idea behind the news-sharing service is quite like what is proposed in this paper. For instance, the EBU has launched the Contribution to Society project to help members “identify, assess and communicate the benefits that PSB brings to national economies, culture and democracy.” However, the news-sharing service is limited by considering EU citizens as passive receivers of media and is disconnected from the EC’s DSM strategy.



NEW POLICY FOR PSB:

NEWS, CURRENT AFFAIRS AND DOCUMENTARIES CLASSIFIED AS OPEN GOVERNMENT DATA

The Working Group on Open Government Data at the Open Knowledge Foundation²⁰ defines Open Government Data as:

- › Data produced or commissioned by government or government-controlled entities.
- › Open data and content that can be freely used, modified and shared by anyone for any purpose.²¹

By making some PSB content freely available for everyone – citizens, researchers, journalists as well as organizations – such data and content can be used as “raw material” for other existing or new services, such as to introduce diversity while informing and educating citizens, build Pan-European news services that offer alternative interpretations and more diverse ideological viewpoints or new opportunities for academic research and analytics such as in journalism and media studies. The whole idea behind Open Data is the increased value of data and content to society as more people and organizations have access to it. Since Open Data, in economists’ jargon, is associated with positive externalities²² that benefit the whole society,

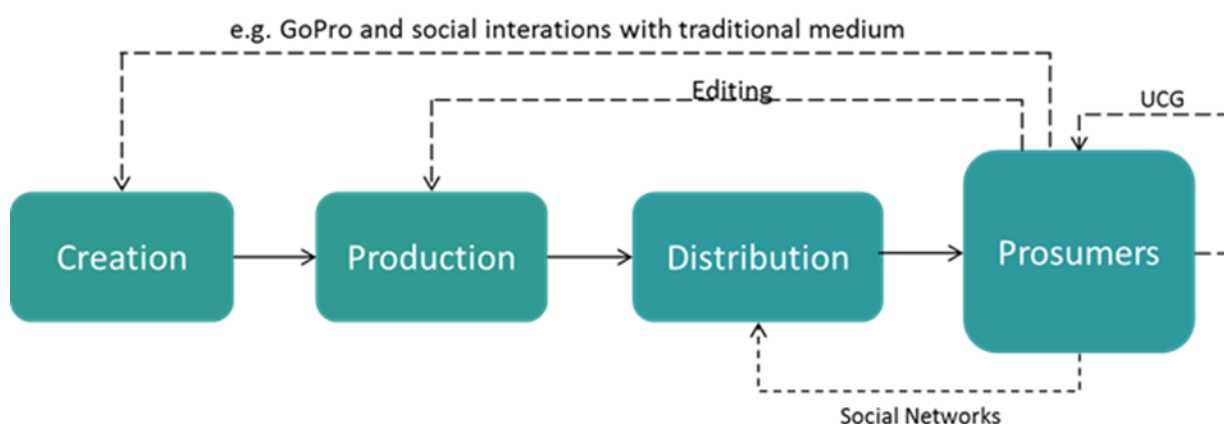
and since a key motive behind the PSB remit is to serve the broad public interest, opening such data and content to the widest possible use across the EU frontier will bring the public service remit to the digital era of data-driven innovation.

Historically, Open Data has been associated with “raw data” like weather data, statistical data or different kinds of measurement data. But when Open Data is also associated with PSB, citizens, journalists, innovators and established organizations can interact with PSB content at all three stages of the traditional media value chain: content creation, production/aggregation and distribution (see Figure 2). This marks a significant change from what is predominantly happening today, when consumers of PSB content are merely consuming and perhaps engaging in limited distribution by linking to public service content available in public service providers’ on-line play services in blogs or on webpages or by sharing such links with other peers through social networks.

However, involving citizens in news reporting might not necessarily be only a positive thing, and challenges regarding, for instance, citizens' journalism have been raised, such as a lack of originality and professionalism, bias and low credibility of sources and facts.²³ At the same time, the claim that traditional media is the sole champion of authority, objectivity and quality in the digital age has and continues to be challenged.²⁴ This is where PSB can make a crucial contribution, since it operates under obligations of independence, neutral and balanced reporting, adherence to democratic values and so on. By classifying PSB content – news, current affairs and documentaries – as Open Government Data, wide access and unrestricted use of such high quality content will offer an opportunity to transform the news into a more collaborative, open, trustworthy and useful forum, which will enable a shared Pan-European debate and identity to emerge.

In addition, several economic benefits of the use of Open Data have been identified and entail direct and indirect benefits. Direct benefits are monetized benefits that are recognized in market transactions in the form of revenues and gross value added, the number of jobs involved in producing a service or product and cost savings. Indirect economic benefits include new goods and services, time savings for users of applications using Open Data, knowledge economy growth, increased efficiency in public services and growth of related markets.²⁵

Figure 2: Open Government Data, and Media Value Chain



Source: ICT and the Future of Media, Ericsson

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Cap Gemini²⁶ has estimated for EU28+ countries that between 2016 and 2020, the market size of Open Data is expected to increase by 37 percent, to a value of EUR 75.7 billion. However, the lowest contribution to this value comes from the arts/entertainment and agricultural sectors.²⁷ In other words, there is plenty of opportunity for European PSB to improve the sector's overall low contribution and in doing so, help to generate more value from EU citizens' tax money and/or mandatory license fees. Making some part of PSB content open to broad use and cross-border access will enable many new innovative services and online companies to contribute to Eu-

rope's competitive advantage in collaborative -news reporting, pan-regional news service aggregation, improved real-time machine translation and stimulate new opportunities for reliance on current news in primary and secondary education. But mostly, this initiative will enable a shared Pan-European identity to emerge by contributing to building an interconnected and ideologically diverse Pan-European media landscape, providing EU citizens with access to alternative interpretations and diversity, and in doing so help to create a broader common frame and increased understanding of European values and identities across the EU frontier.

An interconnected and ideologically diverse Pan-European media landscape can help EU citizens gain access to alternative interpretations, particularly when a multitude of Pan-European news aggregators emerge that abandon the national lens when selecting, aggregating, and making European news available to EU citizens.



MACHINE TRANSLATION

Language diversity across the EU is of course a challenge. It is hard to see a future where Europe uses a common language, or even where one language is desirable. Instead, real-time translation and automatic subtitling are being developed and will probably reach maturity during the coming years. The problem is that translations from one language to another word for word usually don't produce good translations. A translation has to work with whole sentences and find their closest counterparts in the target language. Machine translation (MT) works best when a formalistic language is used, for instance in weather reports, news reporting or in certain professions like law. There is great hope that Europe can benefit from good MT systems that will make it possible to understand news and current affairs reporting from other EU member states in real time. Today, MT is used for quick and raw translations that need a human hand to polish the text. Just look at the EU's MT service MT@EC for public administrators,

for example. Open access to interesting, relevant and high quality content such as public service content (news, current affairs and documentaries) will be a great boost for the development of MT, as it will increase the amount of information that can be applied for machine learning/translation but also stimulate increased private investments, as entrepreneurs seeking to launch Pan-European news services will also invest more in MT technologies to differentiate their services.

There is great hope that Europe can benefit from good MT systems that will make it possible to understand news and current affairs reporting from other EU member states in real time.

CONCLUSIONS

It is necessary for a new approach to PSB to address critical challenges faced in the EU. These include the absence of a Pan-European identity; deconsolidation of democracy in Europe; the need to bring the PSB into the digital era; and the importance for EU to tap into new sources of innovation and growth opportunities. Policy makers' aim should be to widen the role of PSB beyond the nationally confined remit for the benefit of European democracy, identity and cohesion. Access to PSB should not be limited to citizens of individual EU member states and off-limits for Pan-European data-driven innovations. PSB content – including news, current affairs and documentaries – must be easily accessible for personal, educational and commercial use across the EU frontier. In the digital, data-driven sharing economy, public service is the natural frontrunner in the media sector. Consequently, European policy makers should:

- › Give national PSB a new mission to make news, current affairs and documentaries freely available across the EU for the benefit of mutual understanding between EU citizens in different member states.
- › Classify news, current affairs and documentaries that are produced by/for PSB as Open Government Data that is freely available across the EU for consumers and organizations to use.



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